

BATTALION 3 – Battalion Chief Rob Cone

And the Yankee Hill/Concow Fire Safe Council – Coordinator Brenda Rightmyer

Purpose Statement

Battalion Three of the Butte Unit consists of two distinctly different fire potential areas. The local responsibility area west of Highway 99 is primarily agricultural with orchards, rice and field crops. There is a diminishing amount of grass and valley oak, especially near the Sacramento River and the major creeks and sloughs. One exception to this is the Llano Seco Ranch where various government and private agencies are restoring parts of the ranch to native habitat. Durham, Richvale, Nelson and Dayton are the primary communities.

The area east of Highway 99 is state responsibility land situated between the urban areas of Oroville, Chico and Paradise. This area is called Butte Valley with most of the population in the Clark Rd. and Durham Pentz Rd. area including the Butte Community College with a population of 15000. This area is primarily Oak woodland and Grass with some brush. The Battalion continues up the North Fork of the Feather River canyon along Highway 70. The fuel type goes from grass/oak woodland to brush then into mixed conifers and black oak. There are about 3000 people in the Concow and Yankee Hill areas.

The primary cause of fires in both areas is debris burning, arson, equipment/vehicle and power lines. Numbers of fires and the primary causes have declined steadily since 1995. During 1999 there were 12 to 15 lightning caused fires. This is more than occurred from 1991 to 1998. The area east of Highway 99 has extensive large fire history. Fire season 2001 continued the pattern of large fast moving fires in the Feather River Canyon. On September 6th the Poe fire became the most destructive fire in Butte County history burning 8,333 acres and destroying 50 residences for a property loss of \$6,256,112. This was followed by the 70 fire on October 24th. This fire burned 1711 acres threatening the populated community areas. On September 19th 2000 the Concow fire burned 1845 acres, causing one fatality and destroying 16 residences. The Raulson fire burned 1000 acres and 6 homes in 1994. In 1992 the Dry fire burned 800 acres and the Burton fire started on the Skyway between Chico and Paradise and burned up to Durham Pentz Rd. west of Butte College.

The increased population, heavy fuel loading and fire history have created a high potential for large damaging fires and loss of life and property. Battalion personnel are concentrating on pre fire hazard, fuel reduction, community defense, and fire suppression water sources. Battalion personnel including career, volunteer and VIPs are working closely with local fire councils, community groups and homeowner associations.

2004 Significant Events:

1. 10-acre fire West side of Hwy 70, 3 miles above Jarbo Gap on Red Flag day with severe down canyon winds. Heavy air and ground attack.
2. 239 PRC 4291 Defensible space inspections done by battalion personnel primarily on SRA.
3. YHFC completed 95% of the Jordan Hill Rd. project.

**Yankee Hill/Concow
Fire and Fuels Management Plan**

The Problem

Yankee Hill/Concow is a dispersed community of 3,000 people located in the north and west fork drainage's of the Feather River about 15 miles north of Oroville and 5 miles east of Paradise. It includes the areas of Pulga and Jarbo Gap. The Pacific Gas and Electric Company has extensive hydroelectric power facilities and transmission lines in the entire Feather River canyon area. State scenic route 70 and the Union Pacific railroad run up the canyon towards Quincy. The plan area lies in unincorporated Butte County. There is no formal community association. Residents are primarily made up of retirees and people who work out of the area. Timber, Recreation, and Tourism are key industries.

The plan area consists of about 80,000 acres. It lies north of the Highway 70 West Branch Bridge, east of the west branch of the Feather River, south of Flea Valley and the Butte/Plumas county line and generally west of the Feather River North Fork drainage and the Butte/Plumas county line. The U.S. Government, PG&E, Sierra Pacific Industries and other timber companies and local landowners control the larger tracts of land. The Thermalito Irrigation District owns Concow Lake and much of the land surrounding it. Most of the smaller developed parcels are along Highway 70, around Concow Lake and the Big Bend area. This is where the greatest concentration of population is.

The elevations range from 800 to 4300 feet. The natural resources are typical of the southern cascade foothills and higher ranges. At 800 feet annual grasses and oak woodland with blue and valley oak cover the lower foothills. Brush appears at the 1000-foot elevation and is especially thick in the drainages. Brush types range from manzanita, chaparral, toyon and white thorn. Mixed conifer, second growth ponderosa pine and black oak appear between 2000 and 2500 feet. The Feather River drainage's and their tributaries lend towards steep slopes and chimneys. This also contributes to strong and erratic wind patterns. Forest conditions are highly variable in the area. It is feasible to improve forest conditions in the area, and at the same time, reduce wildfire hazard and benefit some species of wildlife.

The Feather River canyon area has a history of large wildfires. In 2001 there were two major fires. The Poe fire started on September 6th and burned 8333 acres while destroying 50 residences. The 70 fire occurred on October 24th and burned 1711 acres. On September 19th, 2000 the Concow fire burned 1845 acres causing one fatality, destroying sixteen residences and injuring several firefighters. In 1999 several lightning fires burned together and burned tens of thousands of acres on the East Side of highway 70 north of Pulga. In 1994 a fast moving fire burned over 1000 acres jumping highway 70 and destroying 6 homes. Heavy fuel loads, steep terrain, poor access and light flashy fuels create severe fire hazards. The increased population in this area creates a high potential for catastrophic life and property loss. Many populated areas have high concentrations of fuels, narrow access roads and inadequate defensible space. A major problem has been a severe lack of water supply for fire protection. There are no pressurized community fire hydrants and very few large storage tanks.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (C.D.F.F.P.) has wildland fire protection responsibilities for the majority of the area. The U.S. Forest Service has wildland fire responsibility for the area east of the Feather River north of Jarbo Gap. The Butte County Fire department under contract with C.D.F.F.P. has local jurisdiction for non wildfire emergencies. Though these three agencies can mount a formidable fire suppression force, they cannot solve this areas wildfire problem alone. The Yankee Hill fire council has been working the last 7 years with the community, fire agencies and stakeholders to provide solutions for our community wide fire problem.

The Opportunity:

The opportunity exists through this proposal to work to with the community to identify strategic projects that would develop a community defense plan. This proposal would modify the model developed in the Butte County Community of Forest Ranch through previous Forest Stewardship funding and apply the modification to the watershed and populated areas of the Yankee Hill/Concow area. This action would provide a comprehensive community-based planning process that would identify needed projects. By working with the community, the projects would be developed and reviewed locally and provide improved acceptance by the citizens. This project would use this year's fires and education of the alternatives to address fire prevention and mitigation from a local perspective.

Objectives

- ❑ Educate K-5 students on fire and life safety.
- ❑ Enforce the public resource code in state responsibility areas and grass covered local responsibility areas.
- ❑ Reduce illegal debris burning and debris burn escapes.
- ❑ Improve life safety in title 19 CCR governed buildings.
- ❑ Maintain preplans for high-risk buildings and target hazards.
- ❑ Improve life safety in Title 19 CCR governed buildings.
- ❑ Detect and reduce arson caused fires.
- ❑ Continue to Reduce impact of large damaging wild land fires.
- ❑ Reduce impact of large damaging structure fires.
- ❑ Reduce power line caused fires.
- ❑ Reduce vehicle and agricultural equipment caused fires.
- ❑ Educate the adult public on fire and life safety.
- ❑ Provide a career staffed fire station in the Butte Valley area with 3.0 staffing in the winter and 4.0 staffing during fire season.
- ❑ Assist homeowners create defensible space that would help them survive a wild fire.
- ❑ Provide 12 months of fire prevention inspector time.
- ❑ Establish additional 10,000-gallon water tanks or pressurized fire suppression water systems. Identify, mark and map existing water sources.
- ❑ Prevent and mitigate fires in landfills and wood waste lots.
- ❑ Plan for and propose mitigations for the building of Mechoopda Gambling casino on Highway 149 East of Highway 99 near Dry Creek.

Prescriptions

- ❑ Continue with school and special event programs.
- ❑ Battalion personnel will conduct 250 inspections for PRC 4291, primarily in SRA and grass covered lands.
- ❑ Support stakeholder participation in fuel reduction and fire defense activities.
- ❑ Support landowner fuel breaks through the VMP program.
- ❑ Support demonstration sites, which reflects fuel reduction and fire safe building standards.
- ❑ Complete required title 19 inspections in schools, public occupancies and care facilities.
- ❑ Complete and update pre fire plans annually.
- ❑ Continue ISO required hydrant maintenance program.
- ❑ Work with fire protection planning on plans for new developments.
- ❑ Fund PRC 4291 inspections in the Butte Valley, Concow and Yankee Hill areas. Goal is all structures being inspected every 3 years. (Funding not provided for this program).

Specific Projects

- ❑ Establish fifteen 10,000-gallon water tanks in the Yankee Hill/Concow area. Two per year. Support rural water source project which includes marking and mapping fire suppression water sources. Cooperative effort between FSC and CDF
- ❑ Twenty-one acre Demonstration site on north side of Lunt Rd., east of Hwy. 70. FSC & CDF effort
- ❑ SPI shaded fuel break on the V line between Flea Valley and Jordan Hill Rd. (6 miles). CDF will assist in burning. (Some lines established).
- ❑ Shade fuel break on the U line between the Rim Rd. and Flea valley. (2miles). (Lines established).
- ❑ Clear road right away and shaded fuel break on Crain Ridge Rd. between Andy Mt. Rd. and Concow Rd. (3 miles). (Proposed 2005).
- ❑ Clear road right away and shaded fuel break on Jordan Hill Rd. between Granite Ridge Rd. and the V line (7 miles). (95% completed of properties that participated.
- ❑ Support right away clearing on 25 miles of county maintained roads. Proposed funding for Deadwood Rd. and parts of Concow Rd. near Community assembly points.
- ❑ Support a community chipper program. Program successful in 2002, 2003 and 2004. Planning on continuing through summer months.
- ❑ Do preliminary-work on Granite Ridge fuel break and Concow Rd.
- ❑ Enforce PRC at landfills and work with protection planning to regulate private wood lots.
- ❑ YHFC has funding for Emergency radio transmitter.
- ❑ Support VMP project for 2000 acres near Shippee Rd. on East side of Hwy 99. This is for native grass restoration on mitigation bank property. VMP planner working on application.
- ❑ Update Yankee Hill Evacuation plan. CDF to provide lead to liaison with key agencies. Funding in place through YHFC.

Yankee Hill/Concow Fire Safe Council

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Mission Statement

To educate and improve community awareness while minimizing fire risk and preparing for other disasters.

Projects

- Revision and printing of community evacuation plan: **Completed**
- Cherokee clean-up: **Completed**
- Dumpsters and Abandoned car clean-up. **Completed.** Entering phase II
- Calendar: **Completed**
- Camelot pond dredging and drafting equipment: **Completed**
- Universal Water Signs and Mapping of their locations: 100 water signs will be made on white reflective aluminum with a blue (W) in the center. **Signs available.**
- Assistance with Detlow Demonstration Site: We have identified a half mile stretch of access road to do clearance on. It also involves the SDA Church, which is one of our Public Assembly Zones. **Completed.**
- Door Yard Educational Visits: **On-going with additional funding sources**
- **Jordan Hill Rd. Shaded Fuel Break** - BLM Community Assistance Grant for focused out reach and 3.5 miles of shaded fuel break along the Jordan Hill Rd. This project is underway with approximately 1/3 of the fuel reduction completed through May 2004.

Butte Unit
Fire Management Plan
2005

